

Pedaling for Parkinson's: New Community, New Riders, New Milestones. Same Great Feeling.

Pedaling for Parkinson's was founded in 2011 by long-time friends Peter Istvan and David Newall in Parry Sound, Ontario. If you've been following along, you know that this once modest bike ride blossomed into Parkinson Canada's largest single site fundraiser, with \$1.7 Million lifetime raised at the end of 2018.

2018 was a year of transition for the event, going out with a bang (330 riders, 10 years of research funding, and \$700,000 raised) in Parry Sound as organizers were ready to step away. This year, the ride moved to Prince Edward County with two new committee leads stepping up (Jim Redmond and Krista Simonett of Ottawa, Ontario) and a host of community volunteers ready to support them.

At its core in Parry Sound, Pedaling for Parkinson's always maintained the same heart and intent as year one: a group of closely connected, passionate riders with a vision of a better life for Canadians living with Parkinson's.



The events, the scenery, the routes and the nuanced details couldn't have been more different between the successful Parry Sound initiative and that in Prince Edward County. The new three day ride featured 180 riders, most of whom were new to the event and first time fundraisers, and raised \$110,000 directed to Parkinson's research which positions it as Parkinson Canada's largest community fundraiser this year. The biggest success was introducing new riders to the cause, to one another, and to a community of support, compassion and camaraderie found on the roads of the county and the grounds of the Mount Tabor Community Theatre.

When Jim and Krista made the decision to coordinate the new ride, they implicitly signed up a group of close personal friends and others in their network impacted by Parkinson's. That meant that Jim's parents and a family friend were secured to bake cookies and serve them three days straight at a rest stop, and that Krista's brother was to bring a corporate team from his office and log hundreds of kilometres in his car keeping riders safe over the course of the weekend. It meant that Catherine and Steve O'Brien would be serving as the local point people during the planning stages and on ride weekend, a job that required hundreds of volunteer hours to pull off. It also meant that Nicholas and Denise Eisner would be on route planning duty – multiple trips from the Ottawa Region to the county, hundreds of miles cycled and driven, and route signs placed for all three days. To our knowledge, not a single volunteer batted an eye leading up to the event or through the weekend.

There was Jeff Parr of Clairvest Group Inc., a past rider in Parry Sound who has always been a significant fundraiser and personal donor. After making a sizable gift to fund a research grant in its entirety in 2018, Jeff was planning on directing his ongoing Parkinson's support to another event. Seven days before the ride, he found out organizers were running short on corporate donations to offset expenses and ensure that 100% of rider fundraising was directed to research. Within a few hours, Jeff secured a \$2,500 cheque from Clairvest Group Inc., making them the largest cash sponsor of this year's ride and helping to honour the 100% commitment.



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**182 Riders
\$110,000+ Raised
2 New Grants Funded**

Former organizer Peter Istvan, his wife Kathleen McGill, and other family and friends from Parry Sound were on hand to simply ride this year. Peter handed over an event to be proud of and ensured that the new organizers were supported with grace, kindness, and humility. While many would critique, nitpick or otherwise have a hard time letting go, Peter and his family took pride in seeing a new successful event spawned. Peter and Kathleen shared these words after the weekend: "Jim and Krista were the perfect people to take over the reins... what an incredible three days of making a difference in the lives of people and families affected by Parkinson's. The feeling of hope, the sense of community, the love, the positivity, the energy, and the authentic vibe were amazing to be part of."

And then, there were the Rigid Riders. This team of 30 cyclists, half with Parkinson's, took part in Pedaling for Parkinson's in Prince Edward County earlier this month. Team Captain Steve Iseman is an avid and successful cyclist living with Parkinson's. After riding in the event last year and helping to set the pace for the pack of riders, Steve was struck by the absence of people living with Parkinson's at the event. After all, there is growing evidence that cycling is a great form of therapy for Parkinson's.

So, with co-captain Mike Loghrin (whose band regularly plays at the Toronto walks), he set out to change that. Many of his teammates had not been on a bike in years. Many had significant Parkinson's symptoms and other challenges. All finished the one day, 40km route as part of the three day ride. Each team member has their own story of accomplishment from that weekend, but all point to the strength of spirit and unyielding energy in the face of challenges that we've come to know is present in people living with Parkinson's.

There was Beth Ann Henderson, who began by thinking she couldn't ride one metre let alone 40km and who finished her race by setting small goals one kilometre at a time. Karen Arts, who fell more than once on the route but refused to take a shortcut and proudly walked her bike the last 2km, crossing the finish line with teammates by her side. Richard Karbownik, who turns 70 this fall, rode in the saddle of a tandem bicycle with teammate Terry (in his 40s) helping to set the pace. And Doug Duke, who has been riding with Pedaling for Parkinson's on long routes for years and who set an example for his Rigid Rider peers on Saturday, only to find himself struggling on the 65km route on Sunday. When word broke that Doug may decide not to finish for the first time in his Pedaling for Parkinson's tenure, participants ranging from 17 to 60, raced out to be by his side and bring Doug home.



Says Doug, "I have been telling everyone about the ride and the wonderful time I had. I will always remember that finish to Sunday's ride. I felt enormously blessed to have been the recipient of your support on the bike and at the finishing line. I have never been the object of such a reception. I can only guess at the drive and perseverance you both must have in making the inaugural Parkinson's Ride Prince Edward County such an overwhelming success."

A new version of Pedaling for Parkinson's has launched with great success in Prince Edward County, and this July it touched the lives of 180 riders, its volunteers, and the broader community. Parkinson Canada is so proud to play a role in this volunteer community driven event, and to share the stories of hope, strength, perseverance and love with you as we know they represent many more happening across the county in communities, networks, and families all around us. We'll see you next year in Milford, July 10-12. For more information, to sign up to 'ride your way', or to support this year's ride, visit www.pedalingforparkinsons.ca.



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